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Vandana Shiva: Bill Gates Is Promoting 'Surveillance Agriculture'

Vandana Shiva and Russell Brand discussed the history of agriculture, the role of Big Food in the current global cost-of-living crisis and how Gates is promoting "basically a surveillance agriculture."

By [Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.](#)



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Prior to World War II, big corporations had no role in growing food, according to Vandana Shiva, Ph.D. "Growing food was an act of care, an act of love," she said.

Today's food and agriculture system is "very violent," Shiva — environmental activist, author and founder of [Navdanya International](#) — told comedian and political commentator Russell Brand on a recent episode of his show, "[Stay Free with Russell Brand](#)."

After World War II, "The same corporations that made chemicals for Hitler's concentration camps [and] poison gases for the war started to trade in food as a commodity, rather than food as nourishment and food as life," Shiva said.

"Then a bunch of them created junk food and [ultra-processed food](#) that's responsible for 75% of the chronic diseases in our times," she added.

Brand asked Shiva about [Big Food's control over agriculture](#) and how it affects the current global [cost of living crisis](#) and if she thought there was a "concerted effort" to exert control over the "basic components of human life."

Shiva said that since the [global financial crisis of 2008](#), "the financial system has gotten into food."

"If you look at the current cost of living crisis — whether it's energy or it's food — both basic needs should be public goods," she said, "and should be regulated as public goods. Most of the hike in the prices is related to speculation and financialization."

'Bill Gates ordered a hamburger'

Brand asked Shiva about the role of [Bill Gates](#) and other [Big Tech](#) "mongrels and titans" in this increasing "technologization" of food and agriculture.

Shiva responded with a story.

Years ago, she explained, Gates visited the Indian president at the presidential palace where "really beautiful banquets are put out for international guests."

"Here was all this wonderful Indian food, and Bill Gates ordered a hamburger," Shiva said, adding, "That's the level of his food literacy."

She criticized Gates' [gene-editing in food production](#), noting that "life is complex [and] self-organized. It's not a Word program that you can cut and paste with no consequence." In editing one gene, 1,500 other genes get destabilized, she told Brand.

Shiva also criticized Gates' "[digital agriculture](#)." The concept doesn't make sense, she said, because agriculture is about "living seed" and the trillions of organisms outside and inside our gut, she contended.

According to Shiva, what [Gates is promoting](#) as digital agriculture relies on large-scale monocultures — "basically a surveillance agriculture" — in which farmers are "forced to get addicted to chemicals and [chemical fertilizers](#)" that harm the planet and people while reducing natural biodiversity.

There was "no way" a surveillance drone could monitor her highly biodiverse farm, she said. "It would get thoroughly confused."

Brand told Shiva that digital agriculture sounded like an example of "extremist materialism to the point of ecocide," in which "the idea of spirit or mystery or symbiosis or Gaia has been extracted" by an "obsession and fetishization of measurement and control."

He added that although it might sound like a sci-fi trope, "it appears that we're doing this already by adopting a kind of AI [artificial intelligence] rationalist mentality that excludes the immeasurable value of that which is difficult to know."

Watch the Russell Brand segment here:



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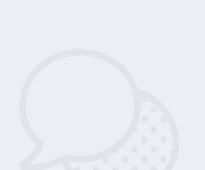
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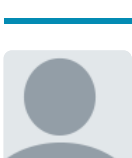
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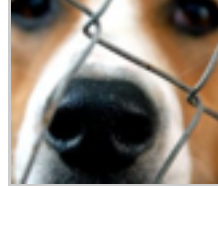
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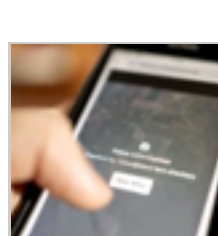
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